 **VEGETARIAN DIETS**

WHAT IS A VEGETARIAN?

While it is often assumed that vegetarians simply do not eat meat, fish,

or poultry, there are many different categories of vegetarianism:

* **Lacto-ovo vegetarian diets** allow eggs and dairy products; however still exclude meat, fish, and poultry
* **Lacto-vegetarian diets** allow dairy products; however exclude meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and foods that contain them.
* **Flexitarian** **diet**, also known as a semi-vegetarian diet, refers to someone that follows mainly a plant-based diet, however will consume meat, dairy, eggs, poultry, and fish on occasion
* **Vegan diets** do not allow any animal or animal products in their diet

NUTRIENTS OF CONCERN

* Protein: According to the American Dietetic Association, research has shown that eating a variety of plant foods throughout the day can provide the required essential amino acids (the building blocks of protein) and therefore, supplemental protein is not needed.
* Iron: Heme iron, found only in meat and eggs, is absorbed more easily than non-heme iron, which is found in vegetables. Fortunately, when non-heme iron is eaten along with vitamin C, the body absorbs it almost as easily as heme iron.
* Calcium: Vegetarian diets usually meet recommended calcium requirements, however vegans tend to have low intakes of calcium.
* B12: Vitamin B12 is naturally found in animal products and is not usually present in plant products. Some foods are fortified with B12, however most vegetarians and vegans need to take a non-animal derived B12 supplement.

WHY BE A VEGETARIAN?

According the American Dietetic Association, vegetarian and vegan diets may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. Both diets have been associated with the following benefits:

* Lower risk of death from heart disease
* Lower cholesterol levels
* Lower rates of high blood pressure
* Decreased incidence of type 2 diabetes
* Lower BMI
* Lower overall cancer rate

It is speculatedthat this may be due to a lower intake of saturated fat and cholesterol and a higher intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, soy products, fiber, and phytochemicals.

Interested in becoming a vegetarian and unsure about what to eat? Contact me to schedule a consultation where I can show you that being a vegetarian is both easy and delicious!

RESOURCES

1. List of Iron-Rich Foods for Vegetarians. Live Strong Web site. 2011. Available at: http://www.livestrong.com/article/209812-list-of-iron-rich-foods-for-vegetarians/. Accessed July 7, 2011.
2. Nutrition and Healthy Eating. Mayo Clinic Web site. 2011. Available at: http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/vegetarian-diet/HQ01596. Accessed July 7, 2011.
3. Vegetarianism in a Nutshell. VRG Web site. Available at: http://www.vrg.org/ nutshell/. Accessed July 7, 2011.
4. Vitamin B12 Deficiency: Vegetarians, elderly may not get enough vitamin B12. 2005. Harvard Health News Letter Web site. Available at: http://www. health. harvard.edu/press\_releases/vitamin\_ b12\_deficiency. Accessed July 8, 2011.
5. Vitamin B12. National Institute of Health Web site. 2011. Available at: http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/vitaminb12/#h3. Accessed July 8, 2011.